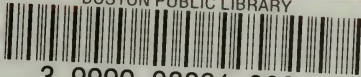


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BRIEF REVIEW

OF A

HISTORICAL SERMON,

DELIVERED AT

DEERFIELD, MASS.,

September 22, 1857,

BY

REV. SAMUEL WILLARD, D. D.

BY

REV. A. CHANDLER, D. D.

GREENFIELD:

S. S. EASTMAN & COMPANY, PRINTERS.

1859.
c

REVIEW.

HISTORY of the rise, progress and consummation of the Rupture, which now divides the Congregational Clergy and Churches of Massachusetts, in a discourse delivered in the First Church in Deerfield, Mass., September 22, 1857, the day preceding the fiftieth anniversary of the author's ordination, by SAMUEL WILLARD, D. D. Text—St. John's Gospel, 7th: 12th. "Some said, He is a good man: Others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people."—From the press of H. D. Mirick & Co, Printers, Greenfield, 1858.

THE mechanical execution of this pamphlet is highly commendatory of the printers. Both they and the proof-readers have done themselves honor in furnishing an impression so beautiful and correct. After repeated and careful perusal, I have noticed but one place where the types have obscured the sense, by the use of a wrong word. The composition of the sermon is what might be expected of the author, and fully sustains his reputation as a correct and accomplished English scholar. The style is simple, easy, and perspicuous as light. It shows the author's perfect understanding of the power of language, as a medium for the clear conveyance of thought. It possesses, likewise, another characteristic, less pleasant to name, but which for truth's sake must be named. It is the most perfect illustration, that I have ever found, of the Frenchman's declaration that the "use of language is to conceal thought." This idea will find illustration through the whole course of this review.

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ant one. It is so particularly to the reviewer, whose personal intercourse with the author, though not great, has been altogether of a pleasant character. Not an unpleasant shade from this source rests upon his memory, while the great personal affliction of the author has never failed to stir his deepest sympathies. And can he take pleasure in discussing the question whether a man, now venerable in years, highly respected in his own communion, and with one exception, which is obvious in others also, was, fifty years ago, "a good man" or a deceiver? If, so long ago, when men's blood in this vicinity was heated with controversy, "few were so disengenuous as to say 'Nay, but he deceiveth the people,'" who can wish to disinter the subject now, and try the question whether, coming to Deerfield, Mr. Willard came open, frank, ingenuous, declaring the truth as he understood it, and wishing to have every body, pastors and people, understand clearly and fully his views of the gospel, and what they might expect to hear from his lips; or whether he came in cautiously, concealing himself, or some very important things respecting himself, and introducing a system contrary to the plain import of the letter which was the first step to his introduction? Yet this is the only question of importance which the sermon opens for consideration. On page 4, the author says: "To give such a statement of facts and events, as will enable you and others to decide, whether that minister was entitled to Christian charity, and whether those who said, 'He is a good man,' and acted accordingly, had a reasonable apology for so doing." Thus the question is stated by the author himself; and all will see that it is entirely personal. For this reason, as well as for the unpleasant character of the question itself, the reviewer could most heartily wish that the whole subject had been left to the oblivion, to which it was evidently hastening before that sermon was preached.

But oblivion now is out of question. The sermon is historical, and designed as a guide to those "who may

hereafter write the ecclesiastical history of Massachusetts." As history it lies before the public, and by its omissions, rather than by direct assertions, has doubtless before this led many, who had not other means of information, to form the most erring and ungracious judgment of the character of some of the best men and best ministers that ever blest the Churches of Franklin County. For this reason it may be thought worthy of a much more full and extended notice than the reviewer is capable of giving it. Of this the reader will judge for himself.

What I have to say will be limited, almost exclusively, to the sermon itself. In a few instances I may borrow from memory, and in a few refer to other documents; but the reader, who has the discourse before him, will have the authority on which is based the substance of this review.

To judge discreetly upon all matters connected with the question, it seems necessary to know distinctly the point of difference between Mr. Willard and that first Council. For this we search in vain in the sermon. It appears to me that this ought not to be. The dead are not here to speak; and few, very few, after the lapse of fifty years, are qualified to speak for them. It seems to me, therefore, highly important that the historian should give a precise view of the facts; especially as some definite knowledge of the controversy is necessary to a fair solution of the question which he has raised. But we have nothing to guide us here. Those topics are often referred to, but always by some general term or phrase altogether indefinite. Caution here is so apparent, and so apparently studied, that we can but fancy a peculiar significance in his words when he calls himself a "Disciple of the cautious Dr. Appleton." And here, as it often helps to an understanding of the peculiarities of a person's course, to know the educational influences which have contributed to the formation of his character, it may not be amiss to spend a few moments upon the character of that gentleman, as

drawn by Dr. Willard. "He was a practical and very serious preacher, acceptable to the Orthodox, and I believe, to many who differed widely from them in speculation. Rev. Dr. Sprague * * ranks him * * with the Orthodox, on the ground that he was always in fellowship with them. * * * But I am confident in the opinion, that, when I was with him, he was neither a Calvinist, nor a Trinitarian, in any proper sense of the terms; nor, as I think, to the end of life, though he did believe in a kind of atonement, and a transmitted tendency to evil, which had some affinities with Calvinism. * * * But, whatever his speculations might be, he was reserved, and, as some would say, extremely cautious how he expressed his sentiments either in public or in private, on those questions which have so long divided the Christian world, lest he should lose the power and opportunities for urging with the greatest success those plain doctrines of the Gospel, which bear directly on the conscience, and were in his view, chiefly 'the wisdom and power of God, unto salvation.'" Such was Dr. Appleton. What was his influence upon his pupil? "Something of this caution he endeavored to infuse into me; and the advice and admonitions he gave me, sustained as they seemed to be by the example of the Great Teacher, had an influence on my subsequent ministry, more lasting and effectual, I think, than could be ascribed to any other man, however great my love and respect for him;—however long and intimate our acquaintance."

As this is all that I know of Dr. Appleton, I must of course consider it as authority. And, in view of it, I cannot but ask, Was Dr. Appleton a representative man? I remember to have read in a publication of Dr. Morse, a few years after the transactions in Deerfield, a letter from a distinguished Unitarian in this country to a distinguished Unitarian in England. Names, date and expressions are gone from me. I give only the thought as it has lain in my mind, supplying the language as best I can. We—

Unitarians—do not make direct and open assaults on Orthodoxy; but we have a number of preachers, others in preparation, who, by cautious and “prudent sermons,” are preparing the way for a better system. Was Dr. Appleton a representative of such a class? And was it a part of his business to train such prudent and cautious preachers?—to teach young men to keep dark, and under the cover of darkness to introduce the light, which is to illuminate and bless our world?—to give a wrong impression of history by omitting important truths, and fix a foul stain upon the character of good men, by not revealing the principles necessary for their justification? Be it far from me to assert any such thing. But Dr. Willard’s description of Dr. Appleton reminded me strongly of that ancient letter. If Dr. Appleton had really been such a teacher, and we were to judge of his capacity by the attainments of his pupil, we should certainly think him very competent to the work of his profession; for never in giving a history of a controversy, did any body succeed better, if that were their main object, in keeping the real subject of that controversy out of sight. In a single instance, which will be noticed in its proper place, a gleam of light breaks upon a particular point. As for the rest, we only learn that there was a great controversy about “mysteries,” “speculations,” “theological opinions,” and once it is a “certain shiboleth”—any thing in general but what in particular?—What?—

Did Dr. Willard suppose that his sermon could go down to posterity, unchallenged as a fair, impartial presentation of that controversy? Another of his assistants in preparation for the ministry was Dr. McKean, of whom, as of Dr. Appleton, the reviewer knows what is stated in the sermon, and nothing more. Dr. Willard says, “The Orthodox claimed Dr. McKean as one of their number, and I cannot say that his Theological speculations were not with theirs.” But what particularly concerns us is what is embodied in the following sentence:—“If, there-

fore, he believed in the Calvinistic doctrines, he must have considered them of little or no comparative importance in winning souls to Christ, as very far from constituting the vitality and Divine power of the Gospel." Observe: "Of little or no *comparative importance* in winning souls to Christ." That there were some such men in those days, the reviewer can easily believe; because he well recollects to have heard old ministers as Mr. Emerson, Mr. Taggart and others, speak of such with strong expressions of sorrow and disapprobation; men, who believed or professed to believe the truth, yet in their preaching treated it as "Of little or no comparative importance." He remembers, too, that it was remarked by them—to what extent the remark has been found true he knows not—that where such a ministry had been of long standing, Unitarianism was sure to find an easy admittance and ready entertainment. Dr. Willard does not, as in the case of Dr. Appleton, speak of the influence of this gentleman's instruction and example upon his mind; but nobody can fail of seeing a strong resemblance in one respect. Whatever the subjects of difference between Mr. Willard and the Council they are evidently considered by him as "Of little or no comparative importance." This appears from the epithets by which he alludes to them. They are sometimes "Mysteries of Theology." On page 30, he speaks of the controversy as a "Contest about the deep mysteries of Theology;" sometimes they are "Theological opinions;" sometimes "speculative doctrines." In one place "Religious speculations." On page 10 he seems to sum them all up in a single term, a "shibboleth" which he feared he could not "'Frame to pronounce.'" All this is sufficiently cool and sufficiently dark; so dark that if I were a youth, with no data but what are given in the sermon, from which to judge, as is the case with most of the youth in our country, I should conclude, either that the sermon were a romance, or that the ministers who refused ordination to Mr. Willard, and those who refused to sit

with him in Council at Greenfield, were some of the most ignorant intolerant bigots of modern times, and he one of the most abused men, that, since the times of persecution, have suffered from Protestant intolerance. But he speaks well of them. Yes. Page 20 having mentioned "Dr. Lyman," "Father Emerson," and "Mr. Packard," as "among the most active and decided" of his opponents, he takes them on his wings, conveys them to an eminence so lofty that few of our most ardent eulogists would dare attempt the dizzy flight. Far be it from me to find fault with Dr. Willard's kind wishes towards these men. May they be fully realized. But, as readers of his historical sermon, we are to judge not from his feelings but from his facts; and taking the facts as he has left them, what can we judge of those men only that they were, as characterized by a distinguished Unitarian preacher, who was in the county before Dr. Willard, "Ignorant, overbearing, intolerant bigots." And how can we have charity for them, unless we go to the facetious Witherspoon and find charity thus—"To believe a man a christian without any evidence at all?"

That the doctrines so often alluded to as mysteries, speculations, &c., are "Of little or no comparative importance," is evidently the fundamental principle of the sermon; the central idea, from which all its other parts radiate, or to which they tend. How important, then, that the reader should have a distinct understanding of them. Why then is he kept in the dark? To say that they were not clear in the mind of the author would be a libel on his intellectual and literary character. Besides, he speaks of them in opposition to "The plain doctrines of the Gospel, which bear upon the conscience." If he had told us what those plain doctrines were, we might perhaps have obtained a proximate knowledge of the others, by comparison and contrast. But we are in total darkness, and under a dark cloud we approach the time of his introduction to Deerfield.

“In the Summer of 1806”—page 8,— * * “I requested Dr. Webber, then lately inducted into the office of President, that if any inquiries were made of him for a candidate for the ministry, from a place where he thought I should be acceptable, he would mention my name. He replied, that he had then a letter from Deerfield, written in behalf of the Committee by Rev. John Taylor. The most important part of that letter was the description of the candidate desired, which was something like this: ‘a man of moderate Orthodoxy like the late Professor Tappan.’” Of the phrase, “moderate Orthodoxy,” the reviewer cannot say that he has a very clear or definite idea. But in this case, from his knowledge of the writer of the letter, he is certain that it did not mean any grade or form of Unitarianism. The candidate seems to have been aware of this, and says: “I expressed a doubt whether I could honestly allow myself to be recommended, as I apprehended there was a difference between Dr. Tappan’s speculations and mine.” This was candid, fair, upright. Had he taken no counsel but of his own conscience, the present question doubtless would never have been raised. “Dr. Webber expressed the opinion that I need not decline on that ground.” Mark! the ground that I was not as Orthodox as Professor Tappan. “It was true I knew little or nothing about the Orthodoxy of the Professor. * * * Dr. Webber had long been associated with him,—Dr. Tappan,—and had had opportunities for knowing his real sentiments, which I never had, and therefore, I was going to say therefore, I consented, but check myself; for after fifty years I am not certain that these things passed distinctly through my mind; but, believing Mr. Webber to be an honest man, as I now believe, and confiding in his better judgment, whatever the ground of that confidence, I consented that he should mention my name, perhaps recommend me.” I will here say that of Dr. Webber I know nothing; but from his position I suppose that he was a Unitarian of high rank and influence in the Denomination.

If this is not so, the reader will consider my recantation as already made; for all that I have to say of him is grounded upon this supposition. That Dr. Webber as a Unitarian should wish for the extension of Unitarian ideas in the community is perfectly natural. What honest man would not wish to extend his own views of truth. That he should be on the look-out for men, best calculated to introduce and recommend Unitarianism to the public, is also perfectly natural and consistent with the strictest honesty between man and man. That his practiced eye should discover in the pupil of the "cautious Dr. Appleton" an instrument well adapted to supplant the standard of "moderate Orthodoxy" with the standard of Unitarianism, is nothing wonderful; that, for this purpose, he should have a desire and an ardent desire to introduce him, is neither strange nor worthy of censure. But to abuse the confidence placed in him by the public, as in the case of that Committee, acting in a public capacity, and fill an order for a man of "moderate Orthodoxy" with one whom he knew to be a Unitarian, is altogether a different thing. And how his pupil could relinquish his scruples and consent to go where he was not called for,—and why the consideration that he knew little or nothing of the Professor's Orthodoxy, and that Dr. Webber had better opportunities for knowing "his real sentiments," should contribute to the change in him,—and what the "ground" was of that "confidence" in Dr. Webber, when he saw how he was treating the Committee's letter,—all this is strange, passing strange! and let it pass on to the time when many things, which now appear strange because the light is not suffered to fall upon them, will be made plain.

A considerable time after this seems to have elapsed before the negotiations with Deerfield were completed. During this time, Mr. Willard preached to good acceptance in several Orthodox pulpits. And when in March, 1807, the invitation to him to "come and supply the pulpit" was repeated, he says: "And it might well be an encourage-

ment to recollect the uniform satisfaction, I seemed to have given to the leaders of the Orthodox, wherever I had been." "From these considerations, perhaps," continues the author,—page 11,—“and others, which I cannot name, I was induced to ascertain by experiment, whether Deerfield was a place where ‘the fruits of righteousness,’ without any mixture of doubtful speculation, could ‘be sown in peace’ by one who was disposed to ‘make peace,’ and to preserve peace.” This is noble in object and design. “The fruits of righteousness” to be sown, I suppose, are the doctrines of the Gospel, to be preached, “without any mixture of doubtful speculation.” This is precisely what the world needs. May such preachers be multiplied a thousand fold. The words are also sufficiently self-complimentary. To cull from the whole field of the word the pure doctrines of the Gospel, “without any mixture of doubtful speculation,” must require a mature and powerful mind. It is no work for a boy. Many good men, doubtless, have desired to do this; but few would assume that they were able. As for the desire “to make peace and to preserve peace,” this, I am sorry to say, receives some qualification, if not alloy, from the manner of his first introduction to the Committee of Deerfield. On the same page the author says: “In review of the various facts I have mentioned, I would ask my friends, whether a Puritanic Faith, and something less than that, would not discover the hand of God in this train of circumstances and events; whether I have not some ground to say, ‘neither came I of myself, but the Father sent me.’” It would answer better to a Puritanic taste, and to a Puritanic notion of reverence, if Dr. Willard had not applied these words of the Savior so familiarly to himself. Many may claim to be sent by God in his providence, but who as the Son was sent? But here is an earnest appeal, and worthy to be met with candor. Truly, if it were allowable to select or omit our facts, according to our pleasure, “a Puritanic faith, and something less than that,” might see the hand of

Providence in the direction that Mr. Willard sees it. But taking all the facts and circumstances as he has narrated them,—and I go not beyond the book,—“a Puritanic faith, and something less,” can see an entirely different phase to this whole matter. “God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man.” Yet, in his providential arrangements, he does often bring men into circumstances calculated to try their principles, and by the exercise of their own free agency, to show what “spirit they are of.” That the author of the sermon was, in Providence, brought into circumstances like these, is plain. On the one hand there was in Deerfield a quiet and peaceful Church, living in perfect harmony with the sisterhood of Churches around; and it would not require a “Puritanic faith,” nor great sagacity of any kind, to foresee that the bringing in of a novel system, which, if not in Deerfield, yet certainly in the vicinity, many would consider “another Gospel,” would disturb that harmony in some of its departments. There was also a letter from Deerfield, describing the candidate which they would wish to obtain; also, a consciousness on the part of Mr. Willard that he did not answer to the description, and a conscientious doubt—a noble impulse—whether he could allow himself to be recommended. This on the one side. On the other was the opinion of Dr. Webber, “that he need not decline on that ground.” The consideration that “I knew little or nothing about the Orthodoxy of the Professor” (Tappan,)—the further consideration that “Dr. Webber had long been associated with him, and had had opportunities of knowing his real sentiments, which I never had, * * * * believing Mr. Webber to be an honest man, as I now believe, and confiding in his better judgment, whatever the ground of that confidence.”—And what has all this to do with the question? Mr. Taylor did not want a man of “Orthodoxy like Professor Tappan,” if the Professor himself was not even “moderately Orthodox;” and especially, as seems almost intimated, if not implied, if he had gone over on the other side. And what is all this to the question?

Time has fled, and all things are ready to proceed to the "examination of the Pastor elect." "To save them the perplexity likely to arise from deep inquiries into the mysteries of Theology, I had prepared a written Profession, in which I endeavored to come as near the Orthodox standard as I consistently could, and not a whit nearer; hoping that it would so far satisfy them as to prevent such a scrutinizing into the lights and shades, the doubts and convictions of my understanding, as might involve both me and themselves in trouble." Here two or three questions force themselves into notice. Why should the Pastor elect feel any apprehension of "perplexity" or "trouble?" He could not even suspect that they were going to require him to explain the "deep mysteries of Theology." Why then should he wish to keep any thing out of sight, or what can he have that he would wish not to have known to the people of Deerfield, to whom he expected to preach, and to the Pastors, with whom he expected to exchange? The writer feels deeply here; because, having been in circumstances as similar as can well be conceived, the statement of Dr. Willard has touched a cord of sympathy in his own breast. He too, some years later than this, had received and accepted a call from a Parish. The choice of the ordaining Council he had submitted entirely to the Parish. In this, perhaps, he was influenced by the example of Mr. Willard; for it was an example which he would not be ashamed to follow. Like him, too, he was an object of jealousy, and for the same reason some suspected perverseness of his Alma Mater. He knew there was jealousy; though he did not know how intense it was in the minds of some of the members, till years afterwards. But he had no apprehension of "perplexity" or "trouble." The little which he knew he could tell, what he thought he could tell, and where he had neither knowledge nor opinion, he could say so. True they might refuse to ordain him. What then? That was their concern. His was to show his true colors. Thus he was held to a search-

ing catechetical examination, which occupied the hours of a long winter evening; and was then required to read a sermon, which he had lately preached to the people. Whatever the Council might think of his maturity or immaturity as a Theologian, or of his caution and prudence as a man, he is certain that no one thought that he wished to evade, or conceal, or in any way mislead the Council, even in regard to the "lights and shades, the doubts and convictions of his understanding." Upon this fact he reflects with pleasure now, after the lapse of forty-nine years. And why Mr. Willard should fear "trouble" or "perplexity," on an occasion and in circumstances so similar, is difficult for him to imagine.

If, as Mr. Willard hoped, that Profession were to be received, it must be received *as something*. As *what* could he hope it would be received? As an Orthodox Profession? Impossible. This would imply a design to deceive the people not only, but the Council also. He did not consider the Confession Orthodox, even in a moderate degree. Did he hope they would receive it as a Unitarian Profession? The thought cannot be entertained for a moment. Did he hope that they would receive it as neither the one nor the other, but as so near the "Orthodox standard" that it would answer the purpose to save "perplexity" and "trouble" on both sides? This he tells us was his hope. In this he mistook both the time and the men. The time was past for that game to be played with success. The game had been played, and Mr. Emerson, Mr. Packard, and no doubt Dr. Lyman, knew when and where. But the time had gone by for people to be duped in that way. He mistook the men, too, if he supposed that the "Image of God," the most intensely positive and efficient Being in the Universe, could be described satisfactorily to their minds, by the neutral terms "innocent and happy," as in the Profession.

The Profession is objected to and barred; and the catechetical examination commenced. "Dr. Lyman was the

fourth in order; and the precision and emphasis, with which his first question was put, showed a determination to know, and let others know the precise state of my immature mind in respect to some of the deep mysteries of Theology." "Immature mind." This is very modest—contrasts finely with what was noticed on the 11th page. Still, like many other things in the sermon, it has a cloud resting upon it. As he has not told us what that immaturity was, the most probable conjecture, I think, is that those doctrines, upon which he is now questioned, having been considered by him "of little or no comparative importance," he had treated them accordingly; and so neglected to bestow upon them the attention necessary to a mature judgment. Now if those doctrines were really of as little consequence as he considered them, the immaturity is not to be wondered at, and certainly it was rude in Dr. Lyman to probe his breast so deeply to draw forth a secret so carefully concealed, and worth nothing when revealed. Upon this ground I cannot concur in the apology offered. "Saying this," says the author, "I would by no means throw any reproach on that venerable man. I choose to consider him"—observe "I *choose* to consider him as actuated by an ardent and holy zeal for Christ, and his cause, though I think it was an erroneous zeal." This apology is drawn with characteristic caution. There is another on page 25th. Having stated the conduct of several Pastors, who with him were members of an ordaining Council convened in Greenfield, placing them, as viewed from his stand point, in a very suspicious position, the author says: "How it came into the minds of so many churches all at once to give such extraordinary instructions to their Pastors, may excite the curiosity of some; but whatever may be the conjectures of others, I have no sufficient warrant for denying that it was the suggestion of that One Spirit, from whom all *good* influences proceed." This is caution carried over and beyond, so as to disclose the author's finesse. "I have no *sufficient* warrant." I

give the italics here, but why the word "*good*" is italicised in the text I may have my conjectures, "but have no sufficient warrant for denying" that it was designed to refer to Isaiah, 45:7, or to Amos, 3:6, where evil is imputed to the same "Spirit, from whom all good influences proceed." But to return to the apology for Dr. Lyman:—"I *choose* to consider him as actuated by a holy zeal." But can he? Can choice control conviction? I, too, might "*choose*" to think favorably of the "venerable man," but, taking the stand-point and statements of the discourse, I *cannot*; I must consider his zeal blind, intolerant, and, of course, unchristian. For the same reason I cannot concur in his exculpation of the Council. He says: "I can easily conceive of a case, in which I should do as they did; with this exception, that I should not lay so great stress on Theological opinions." As he has not stated the case, I may suppose one. The reader is requested to open his Bible at the Second Epistle of John; and now, suppose a candidate should offer himself, of acknowledged talents, good education, an unblemished moral character, but "who confesses not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," as in the seventh verse, would Dr. Willard decline "to receive him" into his fellowship, or "bid him God speed," as in the tenth verse? If so, then he would do precisely what those ministers supposed themselves to be doing, and would make the same use of "Theological opinions;" because he "bringeth not this doctrine." If this is not a case in point, I have no more conjectures or suppositions to offer. Hitherto the subject has been surveyed, with what fidelity and truth the reader must judge, from the stand-point of the sermon alone; and the substance of what is learned is that there was a great contest about "speculations," "Theological opinions," and deep and intricate "mysteries." But there is light ahead. The stand-point of the Council begins to loom up in the distance. That precise and emphatic question by Dr. Lyman, produced a rent in the cloud and let in a ray of light upon a single point. "Showed a

determination to know, and let others know the precise state of my immature mind in respect to some of the deep mysteries of Theology, and particularly the absolute Deity of Christ, or his equality with the Father." And is this all? Has it come to this only? that one of the deep mysteries is the absolute Divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father? The question might have been put, perhaps, in this way: "Do you believe that Christ is as really God as he is man?" Perhaps in this form: "Do you believe that God is really manifested in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ?" But however the question might be put, we see at once that it relates to no deep mystery, but to a plain fact of revelation; a fact, in the judgment of the inquirer at least, as plainly revealed as any fact of Scripture. True it involved a mystery; but the mystery is no part of the fact. It lies behind it, in the nature of God, which renders it possible for the fact to exist. This was a great and uncontroverted mystery in the days of the Apostles; and, though many have made the attempt, I have yet to learn that any one has made the least advance towards an explanation of the mystery since their time. The fact stands simple and alone, the most sublime, the most amazing, the most heart-melting and soul-attracting fact in the Universe of God; the eternal, incomprehensible wonder of Divine love. God manifest in the flesh for our redemption, reconciliation and eternal peace. Such, I suppose, was the view taken by the Council. They believed the fact, as other Orthodox people do, but did not pretend to understand the mystery, nor would they require others to understand it. But did they consider the fact as belonging to a class of things "of little or no comparative importance in winning souls to Christ,—as very far from constituting the vitality and Divine power of the Gospel?" Far, very far from that. Learn the estimation which they put upon the fact from the following extract:

"Indeed, my brethren, the doctrine of our Lord's Divin-

ity is not, as a fact, more interesting to our faith, than as a principle it is essential to our hope. If he were not the true God, he could not be Eternal life. When pressed down by guilt, and languishing for happiness, I look around for a deliverer, such as my conscience, my heart, and the word of God assure me that I need, insult not my agony by directing me to a creature, a man, a mere man like myself! A creature! a man! My Redeemer owns my person. My immortal spirit is his property. When I come to die, I must commit it into his hands. My soul! my infinitely precious soul committed to a mere man! become the property of a mere man! I would not thus entrust my body with the highest angel in heaven. It is only the Father of spirits, that can have property in spirits and be their refuge in the hour of transition from the present to the approaching world. In short, the Divinity of Jesus is in the system of grace, the Sun, to which all its parts are subordinate and all their stations refer; which binds them in sacred concord, and imparts to them their radiance and life and vigor. Take from it this central luminary, and the glory is departed—its holy harmonies are broken—the elements rush to chaos—the light of salvation is extinguished forever.”—[John Mason, D. D.] Such is the importance which Orthodox Christians attach to the fact—“God was manifest in the flesh,” all the concern which they have with the mystery is merely negative—it does not prevent their receiving the fact as revealed. This was the stand point of the Council, so long hidden, and at last brought out as by mere accident. This is not asserting that their Theology was right. This is an entirely different question. But we see what they thought, and how they felt, and with how strong a grasp their conscience took hold of what they thought to be revealed. This is something to be taken into account in making up a judgment of those men and their proceedings. We have tried them on the principle of the sermon, and cannot admit the apologies offered for them. The reviewer, from

his particular connection with some of those men, has as strong inducements as any one to "choose to consider them as actuated by a holy zeal for Christ and his cause." But can his choice bring his understanding to believe such a palpable absurdity? He would not in any case presume to judge the heart, but his meaning is, he can see no evidence of such goodness. Stickling for "mysteries," "deep mysteries," "Theological opinions," "Theological speculations," and the "shiboleth" of a sect,—rejecting the "pure fruits of righteousness"—pure doctrines of the word, "without any mixture of doubtful speculation" furnished to their hand in a Profession of Faith carefully drawn for the very purpose of saving them from "perplexity and trouble." By precise and emphatic questions, directly put, endeavoring to discover the precise state of a man's immature mind upon some of the deep mysteries of Theology, which, when discovered, are "of little or no comparative importance." In such a case where is the evidence of holy zeal? I see none; but am forcibly reminded of the man described by the Prophet, "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart has turned him aside that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?" And all apologies offered on this ground, where indeed there is no ground to sustain an apology, only render the color of the offence deeper, and its odor more rank and offensive.

Judged on their own principles, their conduct appears fair, open, consistent, and needs no apology. They acted like honest men; I say nothing of their wisdom, determined to "stand up for Jesus;" and set conscience before worldly interest. This they did at a sacrifice. It must have been a great sacrifice of personal feelings to have simply refused to ordain the candidate. They knew that the people of Deerfield were strongly attached to him. The people, which they represented, were connected with people of Deerfield by intimate acquaintance and many family and other social ties. They knew, too, that the

people had fondly anticipated the occasion, had made more than ordinary provision for the entertainment of the Council and numerous friends from abroad, looking to the day as one of high social enjoyment as well as of sacred solemnity. In such circumstances it must have been, and, as the reviewer has heard some of the Council say, actually was, very painful to be unable to carry out the wishes of the church and people. This was not all. Many of their best friends were deeply grieved; and as for the obloquy of the tongue, for a time, at least, no men suffered more. The rock of their hope was "God manifest in the flesh." Relying on this, they have gone to their rest; and if their foundation remaineth sure, no doubt they rejoice in the sacrifices which they have made for him.

Probably there were other doctrines brought out in the course of the examination, but as they are not opened in the sermon, they do not fall under this review. Yet from my knowledge of questions generally asked by Orthodox ministers on such occasions, I think that, with a degree of confidence, I may assure the reader that they were not, in the estimation at least of those who asked them, questions about mysteries: but about plain facts, fundamental principles of revealed truth; facts, which reveal God's way of salvation and direct the hopes of guilty men. Having thus, though briefly, shown the other side of the question, left so dark in the sermon, I have no disposition to make the application, but choose to leave the reader to make the application for himself—only let him that judgeth judge in the fear of God.

Here I might finish my task, the most unpleasant of my whole life; but some miscellaneous matters demand a passing notice.

I. *That Profession of Faith.* It did not answer as originally designed, but was well adapted to a different use, and was circulated, more or less, in neighboring towns, to show that the Council either misunderstood Mr. Willard, or willfully misrepresented him; and numbers of good

people were grieved on account of the misapprehension of his views by the Council, and thought his creed to be really Orthodox. Now, as it was not understood nor designed by the author to be Orthodox, but only to come as nigh to it as consistent with his conscience, were they not deceived?—and if so, what deceived them?

II. On page 30, alluding to some coercive measures, resorted to by the Orthodox, of which the writer knows nothing, as he then resided out of the State, Dr. Willard says: "I condemn not those who took the lead in such a revolution; but I would ask the question, whether the cause of vital religion, the cause of true discipleship, has apparently gained by this contest about the deep mysteries of Theology?" Here is another of those soft disclaimers, which the author has ever at hand, and which sting harder than the censure they seem to cover. "Not condemn them!" And has he not condemned them in the strong statement which he has made, followed by so many deplorable consequences, recorded for the benefit of the rising generation? Can any condemnation be more direct or severe than this? And will any one say it is not as just as severe? If, as the discourse always assumes, in this case in particular, the "contest" was "about the deep mysteries of Theology," "speculations," &c., and there has been a decline of vital piety in consequence, as the question evidently implies, they are condemned, and no white-washing can hide the deformity of their conduct. Apologies, offered in such cases, are not simply ridiculous; they are worse. "Baseless as the fabric of a dream," having no ground to rest upon, why should they be introduced? They neither hide nor soften the fault which they imply; on the contrary show it more plainly and fix it more definitely on the persons implicated, and what is the use? If a man were to draw his bow with his full strength, and, by a dexterous aim, send the arrow quivering into the flesh till the very feather tasted blood, and then, with a hand gloved in flowers, were to draw it out,

and with a smile turn on his trembling, fainting victim and say, "No harm, I hope, my dear friend; I would by no means injure your feelings," we might hear the soft words, but what is their use while the deed is before our eyes?

But I think it plain that the "contest" was not about "Theological mysteries," nor any other mysteries, but about plain facts. No sane man will contend for a mystery of any sort, farther than that a mystery should not hinder our receiving a fact, when presented with its proper evidence.

As to the question, whether "vital religion" has gained or suffered by the contest, it may be hard to tell, unless we could know what would or might have been the case, if things had gone on without interruption, and those astute men, with their "prudent sermons" and cautious measures, had continued to sow "the fruits of righteousness, without any mixture of doubtful speculation," till the whole field was covered and the harvest matured. As this cannot be known, we may be able perhaps to form some conjecture as to the present time, from the reports of the Unitarian Association. The last number which I have seen was reported May 24, 1853. If the reader has access to it, he will find the Creed commenced on the 26th page, and the *animus possim* in the speeches made on the occasion. Judging from this, it will be long, I think, before Orthodox Christians of any Denomination, will believe that "the cause of vital religion, the cause of true discipleship," has suffered, even apparently, by the "contest about the deep mysteries of Theology," or, as Orthodox people read it, by the decided stand taken in behalf of the fundamental principles of revealed religion.

III. Page 35. "Soon after my ordination, those who voted against my call, and against the continuance of that call, withdrew from our place of worship, and went to other places; * * * as their convenience dictated; and in doing this, they did not generally travel so far as they would have done in coming to this village. In the

course of a few years, a parish was organized, which many of them had been desiring for twenty or thirty years ; * * * * * and this will in a great measure account for the opposition that was made to my settlement, without supposing it to arise simply, if at all, from difference of religious sentiments." All that is necessary here, is simply to inform the reader of what the venerable author has probably forgotten, that those members who left Deerfield and united with neighboring Churches, received their letters of recommendation from an exparte Council, called to advise them in the case, because letters of dismission and recommendation were refused by the Church to which they belonged ; and then to inquire whether the church subsequently formed, without supposing its organization "to arise simply, if at all, from difference of religious sentiments," was then, or is now, more in favor of Unitarian Theology than any of the other Churches in the County ?

IV. Page 27. "About the year 1811, there was an attempt in Dr. Packard's Association, as I shall call it, in order to save words, to form a Confederation of Churches, which should control the action and independence of individual Churches." Of this, with the little knowledge which I have of the plan, I am free to say that I heartily rejoice that it did not succeed. I feel, also, a particular satisfaction in stating that, as I have been credibly informed, the pen of Dr. Willard contributed to the failure of the ill-advised project.

But whence this new and strange and yet familiar name, so strangely applied ? When or how did the Association become Dr. Packard's ? Has he, like a Bonaparte, usurped authority and established his government over them ? Or have the members of that body, such men as Newton, Emerson, Taggart, Grout, Field and others, become tired of freedom, and appointed Dr. Packard, or submitted to him to do their thinking and to rule over them ? How debasing, how vilifying ! And why were the epithets used ?

Why? "to save words." This is another of those strange apologies, of which we have had more than enough already, and with as broad a foundation as many others,— "to save words!" Was ever the person found, whose organs of speech were so maleform, that he could say Dr. Packard's Association, with fewer words, fewer syllables, fewer letters, and with less effort of his lungs, than simply Franklin Association? Truly, there is, sometimes, "but a step between the sublime and the ludicrous."

V. Page 32. Dr. Willard says: "I wish before these lips are closed in everlasting silence, to ask my Orthodox brethren, (for brethren I will call them, whether they reciprocate the endearing address, or not,) whether it would not be better to revoke all the restrictive rules, passed in their Associations, or other ecclesiastical bodies, relative to pulpit-exchanges, and leave every individual perfectly free to follow the dictates of his own conscience, and the wishes of his people; subject only to the instructions of the Divine Master?" To such a question, of course I can answer only as an individual. As such, I say freely that if there is such a rule on the records of the Association to which I belong, (a matter of which I am ignorant,) and any member feels embarrassed by it, so that he cannot answer his own convenience, if he will bring his grievance before the body, I will use my best efforts to relieve him, as an individual, from such embarrassment. But before proceeding to revoke the restrictive rules mentioned, the Association would probably wish to be satisfied of three things. First, that the fact that certain Associations passed resolutions, in which they took a firm and open stand against what they considered error, will not be as important for the future historian of the Churches in Massachusetts, as some other facts which have been named. Secondly, that they have jurisdiction in the case. If Dr. Packard's Association passed such rules, this confers no authority on us. We are in no sense Dr. Packard's Association; not even by succession. True we honor the

memory of that venerable man, who was whole-hearted, fearless and powerful in defense of what he believed to be revealed. We lament, too, the cloud which shaded the close of his useful life. But we never called him master, and we consider it any thing but courtesy to be called "Dr. Packard's Association," especially with the apology that it is to "save words." Thirdly, as the vote asked for, or suggested rather, would cast at least an indirect censure on Dr. Packard's Association, the question will arise, Would it be right? would it be just? Viewed from the stand-point of the sermon, it doubtless would be just that the dead and their works should be censured; and I for one should not be very nice in the selection of terms, in which to express the merited disapprobation; for they made all this disturbance by their contention about "speculations," "religious opinions," or, at the best, for the "deep mysteries of Theology;" things "of little or no comparative importance." But as *their* stand-point has been but very imperfectly revealed, and we know but little of the ground on which *they* judged and acted, we ought not to be hasty to condemn those who cannot now have their "accusers face to face and answer for themselves."

There are other things in the sermon which may be thought worthy of consideration, but the principal object of the reviewer has been simply to disabuse the public mind of the impression which the sermon is calculated to make respecting the members of the Council who refused ordination to Mr. Willard—not by any means to vindicate their Theological views,—to set them in the position in which they viewed themselves—contending not for mystery nor speculation nor any shiboleth of their own, but for what they considered plain and fundamental truth of revelation. Mindful of the injunction, "Lay hands suddenly on no man," they examined the pastor elect, and not finding "this doctrine," they "receive him not, * * * neither bid him God speed."* With their understanding

* Second Epis. John: 10.

of the Gospel, could they do more? With their understanding, could they do less? If this question is fairly brought out, the chief aim of the reviewer is answered.

It is pleasant to come at last upon common ground. On page 34, among other things of similar character, Dr. Willard says: "I was likewise connected with my Orthodox brethren in the Temperance and Bible Societies; and I think they gave me my full share of the offices and public addresses." This is as it should be; and as I hope will continue to be. The Orthodox have no hostile or unkind feelings towards the Unitarians. They are not only willing, but most happy to meet them, and to work with them, wherever they can and as far as they can, consistently with "a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man." For "mysteries," "speculations," or a sectarian "shibboleth," they will never contend. But when any great principle, or what they consider a great principle of revealed truth is ignored or assailed, they will contend; weakly and unskilfully they *may*, earnestly they *will*, as "for the faith once delivered to the Saints." So did the Puritans in England; so, all honor to their fidelity, did the first members of the Franklin Association; and so, I trust, will their successors, so long as the fortress of truth is exposed from the direct assaults or masked batteries of its foes.

And now, without flattery or apology, but with hearty good will to all who may read this, and to all in any way interested in the subject of which it treats, I close with the simple remark: Whoever would sow the "fruits of righteousness" in peace, will find that, next to the love of truth itself, "*there is nothing like being explicit.*"

